



Orange County Climate Action Fund – Project Eligibility and Scoring FY 2025-26

Eligibility:

All public and non-profit entities are eligible to apply as well as small businesses whose gross revenues do not exceed \$3 million annually. All proposed projects must demonstrate a positive impact on Orange County's residents and environment as described in the scoring criteria. All funds awarded through this grant program should be spent in Orange County. Before receiving funds, successful applicants must be legally able to sign a contract with Orange County. This legal standing is not needed when applying.

The Orange County Board of Commissioners (BOCC) plans to use the Climate Action Fund to support projects that would not happen without this funding. Existing projects or programs can qualify if the applicant shows that Climate Action funding would speed up the project or expand its impact. Projects that involve repairs or replacing essential technology or infrastructure must show that they improve energy efficiency and that there is little chance they will receive funding from other sources in the next 5 years.

Scoring Process:

For the Fiscal Year 2025-26 funding round, there will be one open application period in the Summer of 2025, with projects being awarded in Winter 2025.

The Orange County Commission for the Environment (CFE) and supporting staff will be available to answer questions or provide technical help if applicants ask before the deadline for questions. It is a good idea to ask for help as early as possible.

After the application period ends, the CFE will review and score all eligible projects using a formula that focuses on social justice and racial equity. The Human Relations Commission (HRC) will also review and score applications to ensure diversity and inclusion. If requested, reviewers' comments on each application will be shared with the Board of Orange County Commissioners or the applicant.

The CFE will then send a ranked list of recommended projects to the Board of Orange County Commissioners, who will make the final decisions on funding.

Scoring Criteria:

The CFE will assess projects mainly based on these key criteria. Below each criterion, there are example metrics that may be used to score the projects. Not all metrics will apply to every project.

1. Social Justice and Racial Equity (0 to 6pts):

Low-income households have fewer resources to cope with climate change, and communities of color are often hit hardest by its effects. Both socioeconomic status and racial identity will be important factors in measuring the positive impacts of these programs. Socioeconomic status and race should be tracked separately because not everyone below the poverty line is a person of color.

Example metrics:

- Low-income or marginalized communities/households were engaged in the creation of this project.
- Low-income or marginalized communities/households benefit most directly.
- Racial minorities will be hired and/or are essential to the completion of the project.
- Any negative side effects of the project do not impact any low-income or marginalized communities/households.

2. Emissions Reduced (0 to 4 pts):

This criterion rewards projects that reduce the most emissions, especially those reducing emissions within Orange County (e.g., transportation, carbon farming), instead of at power plants outside the County.

Example metrics:

- A significant amount of greenhouse gas emissions will be reduced within Orange County because of this project.
- Greenhouse gas emissions reductions are directly attributable to the project.

3. Efficient Use of Funds (0 to 4 pts):

The impact of each project will be measured based on how much it reduces emissions per dollar of investment from the Climate Action Fund.

Example metrics:

- Impact per grant dollar.
- Generated cost savings over a reasonable payback period.
- Acceleration or expansion of existing programs that already show positive impact.
- Leveraging other funding sources.
- The proposed project positions the applicant for future funding from other sources.

4. Capacity of Applicant (0 to 3 pts)**Example metrics:**

- Applicant has the expertise to complete the project and shows understanding of what is needed to accomplish the project goals.
- Applicant has done similar projects or has collaborators with direct experience in the project field.

5. Local Economic Development (0 to 3 pts):

Reducing the impacts of climate change can also help boost local economic growth and create new job opportunities. The County wants to support projects that focus on local investments in renewable energy and clean technologies.

Example metrics:

- Number of Orange County residents employed by the applicant organization.
- % of project materials that are sourced within Orange County/The Triangle/North Carolina.

6. Amount and Duration of Engagement (0 to 3 pts):

This criterion looks at how well projects educate the community on climate change impacts, solutions, and resilience, as well as how they increase awareness and engagement.

Example metrics:

- Number of people reached.
- Retention of new knowledge or attitude after project completion.
- Likelihood of impacted audience continuing engagement with climate change efforts.

7. Time to Complete (0 to 3 pts):**Example metric:**

- Project can be completed or show clear positive impacts within two years or less.

Project Scoring Table:

Project	Cost Estimate	Social Justice/ Racial Equity (6 pts)	Emissions Reduced (4 pts)	Efficient Use of Funds (4 pts)	Capacity of Applicant (3 pts)	Local Economic Development (3 pts):	Amount and Duration of Engagement (3 pts):	Time to Complete (3 pts):	Total	Rank*
Total (Max for 2025-26 \$267,750)										

*All projects, including those that tied in their scoring and those that exceed the funding limit will be placed in rank order by Commission for the Environment (CFE) voting.